



SITE EVALUATION **PROCEDURES**

The purpose of the Deschutes County Environmental Health's (DCEH) on-site program is to ensure that household wastewater is properly treated and disposed. This is to protect the family, neighborhood and the community from health problems relating to exposure to human sewage. A properly designed on-site system will also protect the ground water and other public waters from contamination from untreated sewage. The first step for approval of an on-site sewage disposal system is the site evaluation.

What is a "Site Evaluation"?

A site evaluation involves the investigation of the treatment and disposal capabilities of the soils on the lot. Native soil has the capability of treating the wastewater by physical, chemical and biological means. The crucial factors in a site evaluation are depth of "effective soil" (soil which will properly treat household waste water) and separation from limiting factors such as water tables and bedrock. Other main elements used to determine site capability include; soil texture, slope, and amount of useable area (area that has proper depth of "effective soil"). There must be enough useable area that meets setbacks from surface bodies of water, wells, escarpments, cuts and fills, structures, property lines, and other encumbrances for an initial and reserve on-site systems. If there is not enough useable area or not enough effective soil for a standard drainfield there are alternative on-site systems, which require somewhat less area and effective soil. Site evaluation procedure dictates evaluating for a standard system first, then evaluating for the alternative systems before denying the lot for any on-site system.

When is a site evaluation required for the property?

A site evaluation is required before any septic or building permits can be issued. Upon providing an address or legal description, County records can be searched to determine whether a site evaluation has ever been performed on the lot, and if the record of the previous evaluation is still valid. If a valid site evaluation is found and the parcel has not been altered or partitioned, a new evaluation is not required. If the previous site evaluation has incomplete information, or new information has been discovered, a re-evaluation may be required. If you wish to locate your drainfield in a different area than the "approved area" noted on the existing site evaluation, a new site evaluation will be required.



How is a site evaluation initiated?

It is the responsibility of the applicant to have test pits dug. Soil test pits must be dug in the area where you wish to site the drainfield, and/or in the area with the best soil for wastewater treatment. DCEH recommends having a Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) licensed installer dig the test pits. Most of the installers have the experience to know where the best soils might be, what the setbacks are, and which areas may fit a drainfield. A minimum of 2 test pits is required, but we encourage you to dig as many test pits as necessary to demonstrate a suitable wastewater treatment area. Pits should be 75 feet apart and be approximately 4 feet wide, 4 feet long, and as deep as possible to a maximum of 5 feet. A backhoe is recommended for digging test pits. One end of the test pit is required to be sloped, to allow the Sanitarian easy access into the pits so the soil horizons can be examined, and to prevent entrapment of children or animals. The holes shall be dug prior to site evaluation application.

To Apply:

Obtain and complete a site evaluation application form providing all of the required information. Community Development personnel will complete the blanks under 'zoning and legal lot'. In the space provided on the application, an accurate sketch of the property must be drawn showing roads and other landmarks and specifically identifying the location of the test pits from the closest two property lines. **It is critical that well information be included on site evaluation applications. When digging test pits, wells on adjacent properties should be located and noted on the application with accurate distances. (The sanitarian has permission to go onto the subject property but does not have permission to go onto other properties.)** A separate sheet may be used for the sketch of a large property indicating the details of the test pits' location. The corners of the property need to be physically located and staked or flagged. It is helpful to have the property line strung. The application form must be signed and submitted with the appropriate fee.

A vicinity map must be included with the application. The map can either give clear written directions or show the route from a highway. Taking a moment to provide accurate directions for us will allow the County to provide timely service for our customers. The property should be promptly posted with the orange address card (provided at application) to help locate the property entry point. Incomplete and/or incorrect information will delay the completion of the site evaluation.

When will the results be available and what do they mean?

After the site evaluation is submitted the maximum turnaround time for finishing the evaluation is 30 calendar days, with emphasis on completing the evaluation as soon as possible. Presently our average turnaround time is 14 days. During the winter, that time may be extended due to weather and soil conditions. A site evaluation cannot be performed if the ground is frozen or snow covered. If a problem arises during the interim period, the applicant or authorized representative will be contacted.

Upon completion of the site visit, a County sanitarian will complete a site evaluation report

which specifies the approved area, the type and size of on-site system components required and any special items required for installation of the system. The site evaluation letter is then typed up and mailed as soon as it is ready.

If there is a question or wrong information on the site evaluation, please call us and we will make the corrections or explain our decisions. There is a formal process for a site evaluation through the local DEQ office, 2146 NE 4th Suite 104, Bend, OR 97701 (541) 388-6146

How long is the site evaluation valid?

DCEH is confident of the validity of all site evaluations less than 10 years old. For site evaluations that are older than 10 years, we must consider all new information, new DEQ rules, and whether it is possible to site an on-site system with the information given in the site evaluation, before saying the site evaluation is valid. If the site evaluation is not valid, the type of system can be changed to meet current rules or if soil information is needed a re-evaluation can be required. DCEH will make every effort to site an on-site system on a previously approved lot, but will not jeopardize public health in that effort.

Questions and concerns?

Questions concerning the site evaluation application or process should be directed to:

Deschutes County Environmental Health Division,
117 NW Lafayette Ave Bend OR 97701
(541)388-6519

<http://www.co.deschutes.or.us/cdd/envhealth/index.cfm?fuseaction=onsitesys>

Information on DEQ licensed installers and other aspects of the state On-Site program:

<http://www.deq.state.or.us/wq/onsite/onsite.htm>

